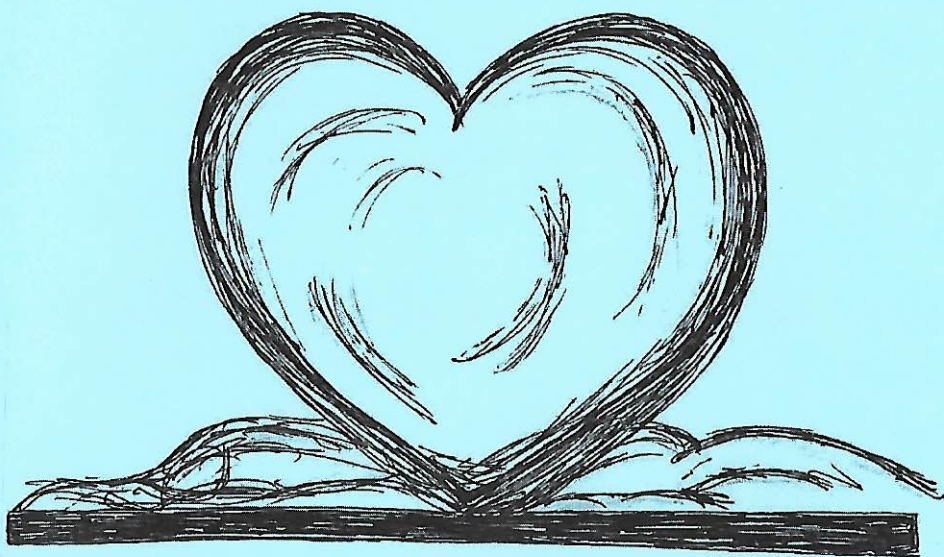


the
RAD MAG



SPARKLE

ISSUE #4 | WINTER 2021



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What now?

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Gingerbread everything * * * editor

Dude hugs * * * developmental support



= featured in every issue



Letter from the Editor

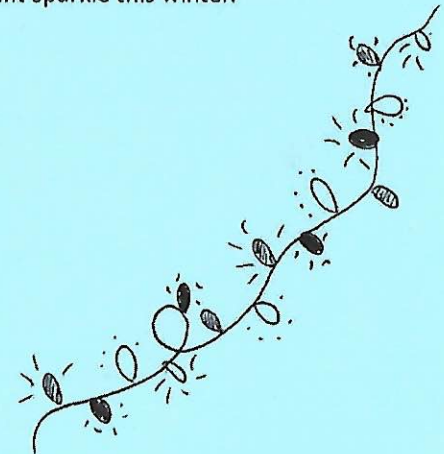
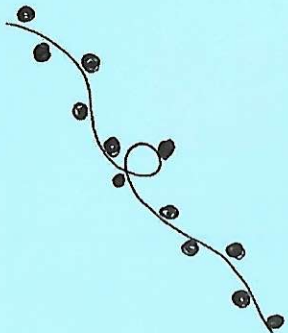
I have problems with white light. It messes with my eyes in a way other light does not. If you're ever at a concert with me, take a peek when a white light blasts across the crowd – I'm probably looking at the ground. I also always need to wear sunglasses. Which is why it's sort of funny that my favorite part of winter is how bright it is. It's not really white light, though, it's iridescent, isn't it? The sun shines down on the ground and the snow sends a sparkle out into the world that is wholly unique. You only get that sparkle in the winter, when everything freezes, and the trees starkly stick up into the cold. I've been thinking about that sparkle and about the possibility in that brightness.

We are brighter than this. Humans. We have more brilliance to offer back to the universe than we can imagine. Each of us and as a whole. The happiness that comes from a shiny winter day – may we bring that happiness to others.

I am going to enjoy the cold this year and focus on coziness. I'm going to snuggle into my inner self, snuggle into my loved ones (even if that means digital snuggles), and let myself enjoy the cold air and bright days.

Wishing you calm peace and abundant sparkle this winter.

Candi





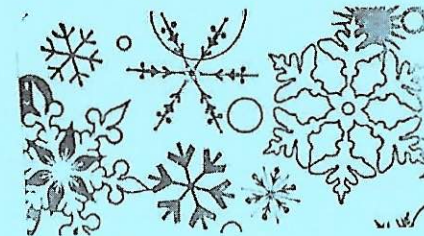
Snow

by Sara

Each winter I look forward to the first ground-covering snow fall. The quiet that comes with a snow fall and the smell of winter brings me back to my childhood in the Midwest. In those moments, I reminisce about the bright lights that my dad hung up on the eaves of the house that I could see from my bedroom window; my Gramma's cooking and the sound of her voice and the endless hours of her beating everyone at every card game; and my long-gone best friend, Rudie, a shi-tzu who rarely barked. The quiet of a snow fall allows me to wander through my memories of connection without interruption – snow forts that were masterpieces for just a few weeks (snow lasts longer in the Midwest); the loneliness of being quiet and young in a family full of people with very loud, sure opinions; Gramma playing a kid's card game so I could play, too. Sometimes I wonder what I would have been without that particular upbringing, but mostly I wish I could pull Rudie in a little homemade basket on wheels again or play cards with Gramma for a few hours. I hang on to the feeling of being loved, of loving, of feeling connected to lovely individuals.

Snow acts as a sound insulator because of its molecular structure. Snowflakes are porous, essentially; the intricately frozen water drops cling together leaving space between their frozen parts which, when accumulated, muffle sound. Sound waves bounce off harder surfaces and reverberate through the air, but a fresh snowfall doesn't have a flat surface for those waves to bounce off. The winter smell of snow is a dampening of the usual outdoor odors – it's not really the snow itself, but rather the slowing down of molecules due to lower temperatures which our olfactory senses can't quite acclimate to. Snowy winter days don't amplify sound or smells; they lessen our ability to hear and smell. The familiar sounds and smells of our present day fade a bit, allowing remembered sounds and smells to come to mind.

My favorite thing to do when the snow covers the sounds and smells of the world for the first time each year is to let my dogs into the yard while I sip some kind of warm drink and remember. My oldest dog, Jack, loves the snow. His eye lights up and he prances as well as his aging ankles will let him. Walter, my middle dog, mostly likes getting dried with a hair dryer when he comes inside, but he loves the snow until it clings to his fur. My puppy Benny hasn't seen snow yet – I bet he'll like it, though. I try my hardest to hold them in - their excitement, their sounds, their smells; someday I will likely have to remember their love, too, while I'm looking out at a fresh snow fall. How fortunate I have been to have loved, to continue to love, to be connected lovingly.



The Cleanup Man

by Candi Bartlett

Donnie couldn't write his report. He stared at the cursor. It blinked back. Mocking him. The office was mostly empty. Outside snow fell, safe and slow. He wasn't sure what was more hypnotic - the slow snow or the jerk-bag cursor.

Mostly, Donnie hated writing reports because they were boring. He would much rather recount the case with excitement. It's almost like "must bore reader to death" was part of the assignment. Donnie was really good at creative writing in college.

The case was actually one of the less exciting to begin with. In his first year as an actual cleaner, not just a dry-cleaning getter, the case they just wrapped was barely a case at all.

The contact called Tom in a panic. They weren't exactly an informant, but the conversations Tandi Tate had with Tom were definitely filled with secrets. When Tandi was certain they were being followed, Tom moved quickly. He was very protective of his people. And Tandi might have been a jewel thief but never a liar.

When Donnie arrived at Tandi's, Tom was already inside. His face was somewhere else.

"Hey," Donnie almost had to shout. "Fill me in."

Tom put his hands on his hips and shook his head. "No sign of anyone. Everything is... Neat. And. Clean."

"I heard Tandi on the phone. This feels wrong". Donnie started moving in a circle like Tom, absorbing everything he could in one long take. It was too neat. Someone was after something Tandi had. How many people did Tom know who had things bad beings wanted? The question sort of turned Donnie's brain inside out.

Pop! "Ah-ha," Tom smiled. "There it is."

A wood panel on the wall behind a Lucite desk slid aside. Brilliant yellow light poured out.

Donnie had to look away. "What is that?"

Tom reached in and pulled out a glass-looking rod that shot light into the room. "The only thing anyone could have been looking for." He was perplexed. His mustache gave a rabbit twitch. Donnie snickered. "What?"

"Nothing, with your gold carrot and your whiskers - can you put that thing away?" Donnie held his hands to his eyes and squinted. "What gem does that?"

"One that isn't from around here." Tom looked for a bag. Anything. The place was clean. Which was very Tandi. They definitely took off. No struggle had taken place in the apartment. Yet.

"Like your cactus?"

Tom took a pillow cover from the couch and zipped the rod inside. "Not really, but sort of."

Donnie nodded and dropped his arm. "Oh, yes, thank you. That makes sense."

"Let's get out of here before any unpleasant someones show up." Tom looked up behind them. Donnie realized Tom had a lot of keys.

"What about your friend?"

"They'll show up." Tom's words were confident, but his face said he was convincing himself just a bit.

That was it. The entire case. Tom took the evidence to a room Donnie still hadn't seen and told him to write up the report.

Donnie hit save, send, and shut his computer down. Happy to be away from the blue light, thinking about walking in the snow to his favorite late night coffee place. The one with the big gingerbread cookies. He could get one, or a dozen maybe. What if the snow didn't stop? He would need cookies for days.

A hand on his shoulder startled the gum drops out of him. "Finish your homework?" Tom's hand was very warm.

"I thought you were long gone." Donnie stood and stretched.

"Nah, not yet. Just about, though. Come with me. We'll make a stop on the way out." Tom gestured toward the elevators and they walked. Donnie was still thinking about cookies, but he made room in his brain for Tom's pink nose. When they got on the elevator, Tom hit down.

"Where are we going? Parking is up."

"I said we have to make a stop first." He was very pleased with himself. Those two drinks really hit the spot.

The elevator doors opened on a large room with a shiny concrete floor. Pedestals and cabinets made neat lines into the shadows. It was like a museum filled with technology and artifacts and all of his coworkers. Tables were scattered about and the garland was abundant. Marie from accounting walked by wearing antlers and a sweater that read VIXEN DOES IT BETTER.



Donnie looked over at Tom. "What?"

"It's the holiday party! Welcome to writing no more reports until next year. Or if something really, really horrible happens, but most likely next year!"

They exited the elevator and Donnie got an idea of how large the space really was. His eyeballs didn't quite believe it. He didn't really know how large the entire facility was so it made some sense. Music played in the distance. It was the bat cave, but with punch. They wandered by a pedestal with a silver, shiny firearm.

"Excuse me, but is that a ray gun?"

Tom smiled. "Technically."

"Are you Santa?"

Tom thought about it. "I don't think so but about once a year I sleep for a solid 48 hours so I can't totally rule it out."

"Why am I just seeing this place?"

"We've got stuff down here that could really do some damage." They walked by a case inside a case inside a case. It had four locks. "Someone who knew this was here and wanted to get in for nefarious reasons would spend a lot of time on a good cover. It's not part of the orientation tour."

Donnie raised an eyebrow. "Nefarious?"

"I have had some really good drinks." He thought for a second then furrowed his brow. "I stand by nefarious." A waiter walked by carrying a tray filled with beverages of many colors and sizes. Tom grabbed a short glass with brown liquid. "Nefarious is exactly correct. I just wanted you to see that we take care of these things. Not everything we do is so..."

"Shady? Clandestine? Ethics-light?"

Tom gave dad-face. "Bad. It's actually a lot of really good work. *You* are doing really good work."

Donnie didn't care if it was a yearend rite of passage for the newbie or Tom's holiday spirit, it felt damn good. "Thank you," he said. The music got louder. Donnie realized some people were dancing. Someone called for a conga line. Donnie was having an excellent time. He bet there were cookies down there somewhere.

"So, what is this on the map? The Evidence Room? The Pit?"

"Some people call it The Vault," Tom opened his eyes wide. "But it doesn't have an official name."

Donnie laughed. "This you don't have a name for. Neural Remapping, sure."

"No name means no record. And that is my final lesson for the year."

Another tray came by. Donnie grabbed a drink and a spring roll.

"Where's the rod thing?"

"Oh, you're not ready for that room."

An hour later and the party kept going. There were no windows and the dim lighting with added colorful string lights made everything very comfortably constant. It felt like it could go on forever. Donnie wouldn't have been surprised if it did. Really, in the last year he had blown his own mind. He didn't realize how collected he could be. How much the universe just made sense to him. Everyone in the room earned a party that would rage for days. Everyone there was always there.

Jennifer came walking through the crowd. She had tinsel in her hair and a martini in her hand, her hips wrapped in a tight red skirt, and everything bounced. She took a spot next to Tom, who stood with Donnie on the other side. They watched the room.

Donnie said, "I really like you, Tom. You just, you just really make me feel like I can do this job and I appreciate it."

There was silence among the group for a second. Then Jennifer laughed.

Tom fished a cherry stem out of his mustache. "You're drunk, kid."

Donnie took a sip of something that tasted like a pine tree. "Well the drinks are *very* strong."

Across the room, a few agents stood around what looked like old-timey eye glasses plated in gold with thick lenses. They hung from the ceiling - one of the few items available for interaction. An agent put her eyes up to the lenses and they become Disney princess huge, warping her head and nose. When she stepped back, she still wore the warp.

"What the hell?"

Tom smiled. He was warm and happy and loved answering questions. "She'll go back to normal in about half an hour."

Jennifer nodded. "We are light years behind in plastic surgery."



"Hm." Donnie thought for a second. "What would happen if I put those up to my butt?"

Jennifer sighed, "Donald." She blinked, gaze on the glasses. "Let's find out." She finished her drink, put it down, clapped, pointed, and walked.

Donnie followed, eyes wide, giant smile on his face. He turned back to Tom, practically bubbling, "You're supposed to follow her when she does that."

Tom watched them go, not wanting to be a part of the butt glasses, but not wanting to miss it. Someone walked by with a tray of sweets. Someone else passed with wine. A tall human wearing a blonde beehive and eating a finger sandwich walked up and stood next to Tom.

A husky voice said, "You get the rod?"

"Yes, Tandi. It's safe." Tom breathed a little easier.

"Sorry I had to leave. It seemed like the best option. I booked a gig a couple states over." Tandi grabbed a drink from a passing tray and another sandwich. They had been driving all night. They were New-York-accent-on-parade tired, but also wired. "We should talk about the devices I found and the photos."

At the glasses station, Donnie stood on a chair and very carefully moved his cheeks into position. He was fun, but respectful.

"Later, Tandi."

Tandi smiled and downed the sandwich. "Whatever you say, boss."

Tom looked over at Tandi and smiled. It was so very nice to see his friend. "I say."

They watched as Donnie, with his giant cartoon butt, finally found the cookie table. Jennifer laughed, large and hard. Tandi snorted right into their peppermintini.

There would be no more work that night.

There was a good time to be had.



**WHAT CASE WILL THE CLEANUP MAN WIPE OUT NEXT?
FIND OUT IN ISSUE #5!**



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Chacharone with Candi & Noodle, Season 4



The Fear

Everyone is so scared. No matter how much money they have, everyone is in constant fear of losing it. Some of us become horrible people. The more money we have, the more we can lose. Some of us continue business relationships with people who don't hold our values, clients who treat us poorly. We fear losing the income. The CEOs of giant corporations, making more money than anyone can actually use. They let their employees starve. They fear being poor just like those much closer to it.

It's capitalist fear. Racist fear. It is classist fear.

We are so terrified of being poor, we treat the houseless like the garbage we hope we are not. So terrified of losing our health coverage that we look away when black and brown people die at disproportionate numbers around us. So terrified that we may one day be forced to steal to feed ourselves, to feed our families, we condemn petty crime, never acknowledging that the enforcers are the problem. They are the perpetrators of fear.

It is too scary, everything.

When the money is gone and the people are gone –
When there is nothing left –
Will the fear have the earth to itself?



$$2+0+2+2 = 6$$

The Lovers Card

by @thesubtleknife

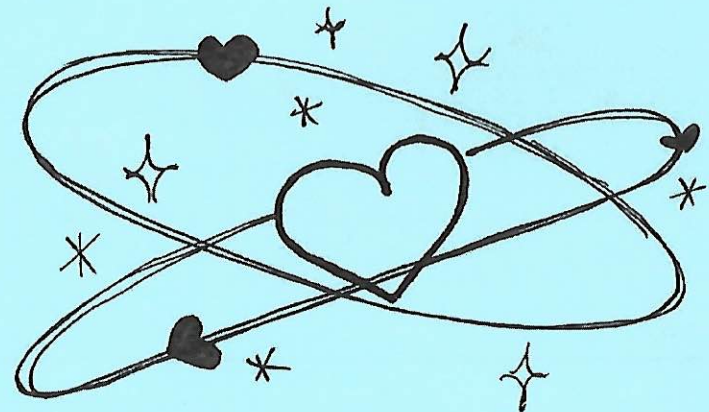


What are you hoping 2022 brings your way? If it's love and companionship you've got it coming in droves. Lucky you - you don't even have to wait to meet that perfect someone because they have been with you the whole of your existence. (It's you, duh). Hoping 2022 was going to bring that special someone into your timeline? Psst - that's giving Hallmark Channel energy; you are better than that.

Sure, maybe the lovers are bringing you the love of someone else or even a few someones (hey team poly - we see you). That's the straightforward tarot interpretation for this card, but that's the thing about tarot - it always goes deeper if you let it. More than anything, this card represents choices. The Lovers card often shows up when someone has been lingering at a fork in the road a little too long. Doing something you hate? Ignoring something you love? Just feeling stuck? I feel that, and the lovers feel it, too. They want you to make a move, so go ahead and do the thing.

But how? Do the shit that serves you and ditch the shit that doesn't. Choose your own harmony over forcing harmonious relationships with others. Fill your cup with all the things you so effortlessly give to others. Indulge in what makes you happiest, especially those things you may be afraid to try or admit that you're down with. Kink-shaming gives you wrinkles. Is any of this easy? The fuck it is, but that's the thing about relationships; they all require work, and in 2022 were putting in the damn work.

So, what's the point? Why bother? What will it get you? Who the hell knows? Maybe there is no point. At the end of the everything, I'd like to enter the big black void knowing I consciously put myself - my needs, my wants, my desires, my pleasure - ahead of everything and everyone else.





ohmystarstankyousomuch



* What a nutty fucking time. I can't totally believe I did this, then I remember that I am supported by the most wonderful humans. They are like beautiful puffy clouds, lifting me up into the sky. Not too high, though. The air is thin up there. They're responsible clouds. Responsible, sexy clouds.

To the contributors and advertisers-
To my special in-house idea bouncer and support hugger-
From so very deep down in mine and *the Rad Mag's* hearts-
Thank you. We love you

- @eviltemptressnd
- @jennibcreative
- @noodlingaround
- @ruruskadoo
- @thesubtleknife

Kira Ross
Sara
Dustin

And to everybody who purchased, read, and shared the zine-
We hope you loved it!



EARTH TRANSMISSIONS



I need some reassuring words.

You smell like pine needles and have a face like sunshine.

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THE STRANGE AND UNUSUAL!

THE PROVOCATIVE AND PERVERSE!

Comic Call

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What now?

Another paper product has come into the world.
Before this super sweet zine ends up in the trash, or recycling, or compost heap
(not recommended: soil that will be used for growing foods)

the Rad Mag suggests:

- Sharing it with a friend
- Using the pages as fun crumpled packing material
- Making colorful snowflakes for winter decorating
- Crafting grass skirts for your tiny pets
- Crafting a Santa hat, just for you

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